

## A Comparative Study of Attitudinal Language Employed by English and Persian Writers in Academic Writing

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### Abstract

Academic writing might incorporate evaluative strategies with the aim of construing and registering attitudinal positionings of writers towards other people, objects, and state of affairs included in the texts, and has been the area of investigation from different perspectives. One of these perspectives has been the way that determines attitudinal assessments in the rhetorical formation of textbooks. Thus, this study is done in order to explore and explain the way that language is employed by writers to project their attitudinal assessments of objects and entities, and also to clarify how authors apply evaluative stance to establish their presence. In this regard, four texts of applied linguistics writers, two Persian and two English, were selected and then analyzed on the proposed framework of the *appraisal* by Martin and White (2005), particularly the one which is about *attitude*. Results showed that writers were disinclined to express their feelings and judge people as *affect* and *judgment* in construing their arguments; however, they showed marked preference for coding *attitude* as *appreciation* which is concerned with positive and negative assessments of objects.

**Keywords:** Appraisal Framework, Attitudinal Resources, Evaluative Language

### 1. Introduction

One of the essential requirements of educational settings and academic endeavors is textbooks which serve to function as the primary means of acquiring concepts and analytical methods of a discipline (Hyland, 1999) as well as providing reliable frameworks and resources for teachers in setting their objectives and preparing the process of teaching and learning in the service of any pedagogical orientation (Nasiri & Ahmadi, 2011; Tok, 2010). In this regard, textbooks have received considerable attention in the area of academic investigation under various topics including EAP textbooks (Barzegar & Hemmati, 2014; Jianbin & Fang, 2013), ESL/EFL textbooks (Miekley, 2005; Tok, 201; Rashidi & Kehtarfard, 2014), ESP course-books (Najafisarem, Hamidi, & Mahmoudie, 2013; Yaghoubi, Nezhad, & Atarodi, 2013), and institutes' textbooks (Sahragard, Rahimi, Zaremoayeddi, 2008; Nasiri & Ahmadi, 2011).

Textbooks are not merely considered as the conduit for conveying informational contents; on the contrary, the interpersonal aspect of textbooks which sets the scene for negotiation among writers and readers plays a prominent role in the recent textuality of textbooks. That is, with regard to the increasingly observable presence of writers in building their arguments and applying rhetorical choices for expressing attitudinal assessments as well as negotiating engagement with readers (Hyland, 2007), a new channel of communication has been devised not only for conveying disciplinary contents but also for creating an interpersonally interactive communication among writers and readers.

Therefore, because of the new trend of communication in academic discourse, in general, and textbooks, in particular, in terms of employing evaluative rhetorical resources, researchers have shown increased interest in carrying out research on the effect of interpersonally evaluative resources in the formation of textbooks. Evaluation is concerned with interpersonal aspect of language and deals with viewpoints, attitudes, feelings, and the subjective presence of writers (Hyland & Diani, 2010; Hood, 2010) as well as interactional features employed for the maintenance of relationships among writers and readers (Hyland, 2005).

Thus, due to increasing growth of writer's presence in offering an incredible representation of themselves by claiming solidarity with readers as well as seeing language as acknowledging, constructing, and negotiating social relations in academic texts (Hyland, 2005), the concept of evaluation attracted the attention of numerous researchers. It has been investigated under various labels such as *evidentiality* (Chafe & Nicholas, 1986), *hedging* (Hyland, 1998; Salager & Meyer, 1994), *appraisal* (Martin, 2000; Martin & Rose 2003; Martin & White, 2005), *evaluation* (Hunston, 1994; Hunston & Thompson 2000), *point of view* (Simpson, 1993), *epistemic modality* (Hyland, 1998), and *metadiscourse* (Crismore, 1989; Hyland & Tse, 2004).

One of the evaluative frameworks which is based on systemic functional linguistic (SFL) and presents a typology of evaluative resources (Hyland, 2005) is the appraisal framework which concentrates on interpersonal metafunction as its major focus. The *appraisal* framework embraces three main categories which any of these categories has their own subcategories. *Attitude* as a category of the *appraisal* framework deals with the positive and negative evaluation of emotional feelings, people's behavior, as well as the evaluation of things (Hood, 2006; Martin, 1997, 2000; Martin & Rose, 2003; Martin & White, 2005; White, 2001a, 2001b). Based on the *attitude* system proposed by Martin and White (2005), the aim of the present study is to realize how this system is applied for constructing an evaluative discourse in the formation of English and Persian textbooks in the discipline of applied linguistics. That is, the purpose of this study is to see whether both Persian

and English academic writers capitalize on attitudinal resources in the construal of their books.

*Attitude* deals with the positive and negative evaluation of emotional feelings, people's behavior, as well as the evaluation of things, that is, emotional, ethical and aesthetic positionings which are expressed attitudinally (Hood, 2004, 2006; Martin, 1997, 2000; Martin & Rose, 2003; Martin & White, 2005; White, 2001a, 2001b). The *attitude* system proposed by Martin and White (2005) includes *affect*, *judgment*, and *appreciation*. *Affect*, as the first sub-category of *attitude*, is related to the positive and negative emotional feelings of the speaker/writer to the person, thing, happening or state of affairs (Martin & Rose, 2003; Martin & White, 2005; White, 2001b). *Judgment*, as the second category of *attitude*, is concerned with the negative and positive ethical judgment of people's behaviors in terms of its sub-types, that is, *normality*, *capacity*, *tenacity* as social esteem, and *veracity* and *propriety* as social sanction (Martin, 2000; Martin & Rose, 2003; Martin & White, 2005). *Appreciation* as the third category of *attitude* deals with the positive and negative assessment of object, process, form, appearance, composition, impact, etc, rather than human behavior (Martin, 2000; Martin & White, 2005; White, 2001b).

As far as the appraisal framework aims to illuminate the degree, amount, and effectiveness of linguistic resources in construing attitudinal assessments of writers/readers, the interpersonally dialogistic nature of interactions among them, as well as the effect of *graduation* resources in intensifying or sharpening and softening of values; therefore, we might find studies that focus on one, two, or all of these categories. In this regard, those studies which examined *attitude* exclusively or simultaneously with other categories of the *appraisal* framework will be mentioned.

In relation to studies which focused solely on the category of attitude among the three existing categories of the *appraisal* framework, focusing merely on the *attitude* category of the *appraisal* system, carried out by Liu and Stevenson (2013) which compared 15 disaster news reports on the Sichuan earthquake of May 2008. Every five news reports were chosen from one newspaper. The result showed that variations of stance led to the formation of a continuum which Chinese reports considerably focused on the positive evaluations of the participants and their philanthropic feelings towards injured people, however, the Australian news reports were much concerned with the negative aspects of earthquake rather than people and their feelings, and the Chinese-Australian ones fell in between with more orientation to the Chinese ones. One more study done by Lee (2008), the *attitude* category of the *appraisal* was investigated with the purpose of exploring the differences in using attitudinal evaluations in high-graded and low-graded essays. In this regard, 12 students of an EAP class in the Faculty of Arts in a regional university of Australia were selected and then divided in three groups as successful, less successful, and unsuccessful writers. The result showed that considerable numbers of *attitude* items

were used by successful writers, particularly evoked *judgment* in contrast to low-graded essays. Meanwhile, successful writers encoded their attitudinal evaluations on the basis of impersonal formal writing displaying formality as an essential requirement of academic writing; however, unsuccessful writers tended to organize their essays by showing preference to personalizing their arguments.

In relation to examining two categories of the *appraisal* framework, Jalilifar, Hayati, and Mashhadi (2013) examined the introductions of 80 ELT research articles written by Iranian and international writers of English in terms of attitude and graduation resources to realize that how evaluative resources are applied in the process of knowledge construction. The analysis clarified that international writers utilized *attitude* and *graduation* far greater than their Iranian counterparts indicating the less familiarity and commitment of Iranian writers to the conventions of their discourse community.

Considering all three categories of the appraisal system for analyzing texts, in one study carried out by Gales (2011), authorial stance was investigated by analyzing an authentic threat text through the analytic systems of the *appraisal*, i.e., *attitude*, *engagement*, and *graduation*. A letter of threatening language, by a terrorist group followed by several bombings in different places in apposition to abortion, was sent to media outlets. The results revealed that various rhetorical strategies were adopted by threateners to convey their socially-situated interpersonal meanings displaying their fluctuating positive and negative attitudinal evaluations as well as strengthening and weakening of their authorial stance in terms of their level of commitment to the propositions of their threatening claims such as weakening their positions by the application of heteroglossic utterances by the use of *may* in showing their doubt and conditionality to the threat. In another study done by Liu (2013), the argumentative essays of two Chinese university EFL students were investigated by the complete the appraisal framework. Being analyzed in terms of high- and low-rated English essays, similarities and differences were identified. Within attitude category, both of them made frequent use of appreciation than other resources. In the case of engagement, the low-rated essay exhibited higher use of heteroglossic resources. Graduation resources were found much more frequently in the high-rated essay than its counterpart constituting a rhetorical prosody resonance.

Reviewing the related literature on textbooks has shown that far too little attention has paid to cross-cultural comparisons of the application of evaluative linguistic resources, in general, and attitudinal resources, in particular, in the formation of textbooks. In this regard, the aim of this study is to shed light on the possibly existing similarities and differences of the attitudinal resources among Persian and English textbooks. More particularly, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Are there any significant differences between Persian and English writers in terms of the application of attitudinal resources in their textbooks?
2. Which subcategories of attitudinal resources are more frequently used in both these two subjects of study and why?
3. Which subcategories of attitudinal resources are more frequently applied in terms of cross-cultural aspect and why?

## **2. Methodology**

### ***2.1 Selection of the study***

For conducting this study, teaching and testing, belonging to the same discipline, were selected. The selection of teaching and testing in the field of applied linguistics was based on a number of reasons. First, teaching and testing is omnipresent in all subjects of study of all disciplines; therefore, gaining knowledge about teaching and testing in one discipline can make valuable contributions to the understanding of other fields of studies. Second, because of the existing close connection between teaching and testing textbooks in the sense that they are two sides of the same coin; therefore, similar linguistic resources are expected to be detected in the construction of their discourses. Also, both teaching and testing disciplines have been numerous investigated separately and simultaneously under various labels and for various purposes. The selection of the textbooks of these two domains of investigation can shed light on how they are linguistically correlated.

### **2.2 Materials**

The study used two sub-disciplines of applied linguistics, that is, teaching and testing. For each sub-discipline two books were chosen randomly. The major reason that led to the random selection for this study was to reduce the possible subjective inclination of researchers which could have effects on the obtained results of the study. Among the four books in these two disciplines which were selected for this study, two of these books were written by Persian writers and the other two books were written by English language writers, who, i.e., both English and Persian writers, are specialized in their fields of study. Therefore, we have four books written by Fenstermacher and Soltis (2004), Popham (2003), Birjandi, Mossallanejad, and Bgheridoust (2005), and Farhady, Jafarpur, and Birjandi (2009). The reason for selecting two different cultures for this study was to compare the application of evaluative linguistic resources from different perspectives and to see whether being native or non-native in English language can impose limitations in the employment of these resources. Meanwhile, the reason for such a selection of the same discipline was to see whether intra-disciplinary discrepancies can have impact in the number and amount of evaluative resources. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to rigorously analyze the obtained results in order to realize the effects of

cross-cultural and intra-disciplinary differences or similarities on the employment of the evaluative linguistic resources.

The number of pages of each book is ten which are selected in terms of systematic sampling. That is every  $n + 10$  ( $n = 10$ ) page is selected for the analysis.

With regard to the possible effect of temporal variable in the organization of textual features; therefore, in order to make the analysis more valid, only those textbooks which were published since 2000 were selected and included in this study.

### **2.3 Procedure**

In order to explore, analyze, compare, and interpret the impact of evaluative linguistic resources on the formation of the selected books in the domain of applied linguistics, the current study utilized both qualitative and quantitative data analysis. The reason of such an analysis is attributed to the fact that by using both these two trends together more precise and reliable outcomes will ensue. That is, the combinatory participation of both words and numbers together for increasing the validity of research outcomes (Dornyei, 2007) can give us a better understanding of the phenomenon under study.

After the selection of the corpus, they were converted into Rich Text format, and then word count was run on them to have a rough estimate of the quantity of the corpus. Next, the linguistic resources of the corpus were analyzed and their sub-categories affiliation were specified and determined. Then, the role and impact of sub-categories of attitude was determined in terms of their frequencies. Meanwhile, the possible reasons of the frequency or infrequency of these subcategories were discussed. In order to normalize and control the length variation across the possibly unequal size, the number of the *appraisal*'s categories of the all blurbs of disciplines was computed per 1000 words.

In order to have a higher degree of accuracy, intra-coder and inter-coder procedures were utilized. In order to cut down the analytical subjectivity, intra-coder and inter-coder procedures were utilized. In order to examine inter-coder reliability 25 percent of the corpus were analyzed by two other raters who are familiar with the *appraisal* framework. Then, their results were compared with the researchers' result. Minor differences, which were observed, were negotiated and an agreement was reached on the method of the analysis. Meanwhile, after one month 20 percent of the corpus was reanalyzed and Cronbach's alpha was 0.850. Finally, in order to identify the possible intra-disciplinary differences the chi-square test was used.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

Considering the process of carrying out the study relying on quantitative basis, the following results were obtained which can shed light on the application of attitudinal resources in the rhetorical formation of academic books:

Table 1 *Frequency analysis of attitude resources in Birjandi et al. (2005) textbook*

	Raw no	per 1000 words	$\chi^2$	sig	df
affect	7	2.703	.143	.705	1
judgment	9	3.86	3.200	.02	2
appreciation	65	25.1	25.323	.000	2
Critical value: 3.84					

Table 2 *Frequency analysis of attitude resources in Farhady et al. (2009) textbook*

	Raw no	per 1000 words	$\chi^2$	sig	df
Affect	5	2.02	.200	.655	1
judgment	17	6.89	10.529	.015	3
appreciation	79	32.2	9.139	.010	2
Critical value: 3.84					

Table 3 *Frequency analysis of attitude resources in Fenstermacher & Soltis (2004) textbook*

	Raw no	per 1000 words	$\chi^2$	sig	df
Affect	7	1.53	.258	.867	2
judgment	28	6.16	17.357	.002	4
appreciation	125	27.34	32.272	.000	2
Critical value: 3.84					

Table 4 *Frequency analysis of attitude resources in Popham (2003) textbook*

	Raw no	per 1000 words	$\chi^2$	sig	df
affect	7	2.214	.143	.705	1
judgment	8	2.503	.500	.480	1
appreciation	121	38.27	34.826	.000	2

Critical value: 3.84

Looking carefully into the obtained results, we can realize that Persian writers have a very strong preference and inclination for coding *attitude* as *appreciation*. That is, both Persian and English writers frequently use *appreciation* compared to other categories of *attitude*. *Appreciation* entails the positive and negative assessment of object, process, and text rather than human behavior (Martin, 2000; Martin & White, 2005; White, 2001b), and is concerned with the "...positive or negative assessments of the form, the appearance, construction, presentation or impact of objects and entities" (White, 2001, p. 2).

Contrary to the functional property of judgment which involves "...positive or negative assessments of human behavior by reference to a system of social norms" (White, 2001b), *appreciation* is concerned with "...evaluations of semiotic and natural phenomena (Martin & White, 2005, p. 43). As far as the academic writing involves dealing with assessment and evaluation of objects and entities rather than human behaviors or their feelings; therefore, it appears natural to have a considerable amount of *appreciation* than other categories of attitude. By examining the obtained results from the above tables, we can realize that *affect* and *judgment* are kept in low profile, whereas *appreciation* in both Persian and English books in the field of testing and teaching are favored by both writers. The low frequency of affect and judgment is a reliable indication that the books include more scientific issues under its consideration. In other words, when any book deals with the feelings or behaviors of people rather than things, objects, and phenomena, the possibility of minimizing the objectivity of the book will be increased. When the frequency of *appreciation* in English and Persian books are compared with each other, it becomes evident that the objectivity of English books in both testing and teaching fields is more observed than Persian ones. This shows that English writers show more tendencies towards encoding *attitude* as *appreciation*. In other words, results show that the objective weigh of English books is more than Persian ones; that is, subjective markers in English books are less or no seen in the rhetorical organization of the books:

The test itself would yield *accurate* [attitude: appreciation] interpretations in one setting... (Popham, 2003)



...that these identity questions are *vital* [*attitude: appreciation*] to the educative process... (Fentemacher & Soltis, 2004).

It has been observed that academic subjects provide *natural* [*attitude: appreciation*] content for language instruction (Birjandi et al., 2005).

It is *useful* [*attitude: appreciation*] in aptitude testing where the purpose is to make differential predictions (Farhady et al., 2009 ).

Table 5 *Frequency analysis of appreciation in Farhady et al. (2009) textbook per 1000 words*

	Raw no	per 1000 words
Reaction	14	5.67
composition	35	14.1
valuation	30	12.1
<i>Total</i>	79	32.2

Table 6 *Frequency analysis of appreciation in Birjandi et al. (2005) textbook per 1000 words*

	Raw no	per 1000 words
Reaction	6	2.31
composition	39	15.06
valuation	20	7.72
<i>Total</i>	65	25.1

Table 7 <i>Frequency analysis of appreciation in Fentermacher &amp; Soltis (2004) textbook per 1000 words</i>		
	Raw no	per 1000 words
Reaction	12	2.62
composition	53	11.59
valuation	60	13.1
<i>Total</i>	125	27.34

Table 8 <i>Frequency analysis of appreciation in Popham (2003) textbook per 1000 words</i>		
	Raw no	per 1000 words
Reaction	10	3.16
composition	52	16.45
valuation	59	17.71
<i>Total</i>	121	38.27

In relation to the application of the subcategories of *appreciation*, the results reveal that English authors tended to capitalize on the encoding of *attitude* as *appreciation* more than Persian ones. On the other hand, Persian writers indicate tendency towards more using of *composition* than *valuation*. *Valuation* refers to worthiness of the issue under consideration, and *composition* is about the way that the discussed issue is composed or balanced in terms of our perception (Martin & White, 2005). It seems that the worthiness of the things and issues in English books grabbed their writers' attentions, whereas the way that things are composed in terms

of their compositional perception has priority over the worthiness of things, objects, and phenomena in Persian books.

*Reaction* is concerned with affection, that is, the impact that things have on a receiver and the way that the receiver might have expressed his feelings towards the things, objects, or phenomena. As far as academic books are less or no about expressing the feelings of writers about the impact and quality of things discussed in the process of writing; therefore, *reaction* is far less used in comparison to other subcategories of *appreciation*. The low frequency of *reaction* as a subcategory of appreciation is evident in both English and Persian academic books. That is, both English and Persian writers show less or no inclination towards the application of *reaction*.

#### 4. Conclusion

The current study has investigated the degree and amount of the application of attitudinal resources in the textual formation of English and Persian textbooks of applied discipline, i.e., teaching and testing. In this respect, the *attitude* system proposed by Martin and White (2005) was applied for the analysis.

Regarding the frequency of *affect*, which is utilized for registering positive and negative feelings, and *judgment*, which deals with attitudes towards behavior, which we admire or criticize, praise or condemn, the results show that these two evaluative positioning, which are attitudinal, are not favored neither by English applied linguists nor by Persian ones. The low frequency of these two attitudinal strategies indicate that because academic books are written objectively for academic purposes, and because in writing these sorts of books writers require to avoid expressing their personal feelings and judgments about other writers, so these two evaluative strategies are kept in low profile.

Careful and thorough examination into English and Persian textbooks reveals that both English and Persian writers show marked preference for coding *attitude* as *appreciation*. The reason of the tendency of both English and Persian writers towards this evaluative strategy lies in the fact that appreciation is concerned with positive and negative assessments of objects, artifacts, processes, and states of affairs rather than with human behavior. Therefore, this evaluative strategy is inherently useful for interpreting and evaluating the scientifically controversial issues in terms of their positive or negative aspects. In other words, contrary to *affect* and *judgment*, which as *appreciation* both belong to the category of *attitude* and involve personal feelings and judgments in terms of others emotions and behaviors; however, *appreciation* highlight personal assessments within textual consideration.

In respect to the subcategories of *appreciation* in both English and Persian applied linguistic books, *valuation* and *composition* were used to a greater extent than *reaction*. The reason might be to the fact that because *valuation* and *composition* are concerned with the inherent challenging issues of the texts, rather

than the feelings and judgments of writers towards people's emotions and behaviors. In sum, based on the obtained results it can be concluded that attitudinal assessments are indiscriminately employed by both English and Persian writers in the textuality of their textbooks. That is, although English writers show more interest in using attitudinal resources in their textbooks in both teaching and testing sub-disciplines; however, it became evident that cross-cultural issue has relatively low effect in the application of attitudinal resources. In addition, results indicated that due to the academic nature of teaching and testing textbooks .

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